

# Les autres branches de la famille de dentistes Cohen Rogers. Un travail en cours

## The other branches of the Cohen Rogers Dental Family. A Work in Progress

Malcolm Bishop

*BDS LDS MSc. Associate; Unit for the History of Dentistry Kings College London. Retired general dental practitioner*

### Mots-clés

- ◆ Rogers
- ◆ Cohen
- ◆ Dynastie dentaire

### Résumé

L'histoire de la branche anglaise de la famille de dentistes Cohen Rogers est un complément à la biographie complète du célèbre William Rogers I présentée à la SFHAD en 2011 par Michel Mailland. La présentation est décrite comme « un travail en cours », certains éléments de preuve concernant des membres de la famille ne répondant pas aux normes acceptables pour un historien. Toutefois, une partie des preuves est suffisante pour fournir la base de travaux futurs, qui les confirmeront ou les rejeteront. On a trouvé que des membres de la famille ont exercé en Angleterre (en incluant les Britanniques exerçant aux Indes), en Argentine et à Paris ; si les recherches les plus récentes sont confirmées, l'Italie pourra être ajoutée à cette liste. L'histoire est convaincante, apportant des éclairages sur les pratiques à la fois orthodoxes et non orthodoxes au XIXe siècle, mais soulevant des questions au sujet de l'influence de la famille sur le choix d'une carrière. Le résultat principal de la recherche a été la préparation d'un arbre généalogique sélectif de la famille (Fig. 1.), présentant les membres qui ont contribué à l'art dentaire et à la médecine au cours des deux derniers siècles. Il a été possible d'apporter des corrections et des ajouts relativement mineurs à l'histoire de Nathan Cohen Rogers (William Rogers II), de Sunderland, et aux travaux présentés au sujet de William Rogers I, ainsi qu'à l'histoire de la famille telle qu'elle figure dans la biographie du professeur Claude Rogers.

### Key words

- ◆ Rogers
- ◆ Cohen
- ◆ Dental dynasty

### Abstract

This account of the English branch of the Cohen Rogers family of dentists is a companion to the comprehensive account of the celebrated William Rogers presented to the SFHAD in 2011 by Michel Mailland. The presentation is described as « a work in progress » since several of the threads following members of the family and those close to them are not up to the standards of evidence acceptable to an historian. However, the value of such threads is recognised, in that they provide the basis for future work, where either the evidence is found, or the thread can be dismissed. Members of the family have been found practising in England, (and reputedly with the British in India), and in Argentina as well as in the famous Paris practice. Should the most recent thread be confirmed, Italy can be added to this list. The history is compelling, providing insights into patterns of practice both orthodox and unorthodox in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as raising questions about family influences on career choice. The principal outcome of the research has been the preparation of a selective family tree, (Fig. 1.) showing the members who have contributed to dentistry and medicine over the last two centuries. It has been possible to make some fairly minor corrections and additions to the history of Nathan Cohen Rogers (William Rogers II) in Sunderland, to what was recorded of William Rogers, and to the family history as recorded in the biography of Professor Claude Rogers.

### Phoebe's grandson and the Anglo-Italian branch

It would seem that three of Benjamin Cohen's children, William, Phoebe, and Nathan, as well as his nephew Maurice, either followed a dental career and/or had family who did so. At present all that is known of Phoebe (Froekje)'s grandson

Horatio Philips is that he appears in the 1911 census as a dentist and dental anaesthetist. The connection, if any, between William Rogers I and the dentist great-grandfather of the famous architect Lord Rogers, is the subject of current research. According to the record of that branch of the family, William Rogers III left Sunderland, England, for Italy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century via Paris. There were two known dentists in the branch - William N. Rogers in Venice, and Marcello Nathan

#### Correspondance :

*Bulls Mill House, Hertford Hertfordshire. SG14 3NS. England.  
malcolmbishop57@btinternet.com*

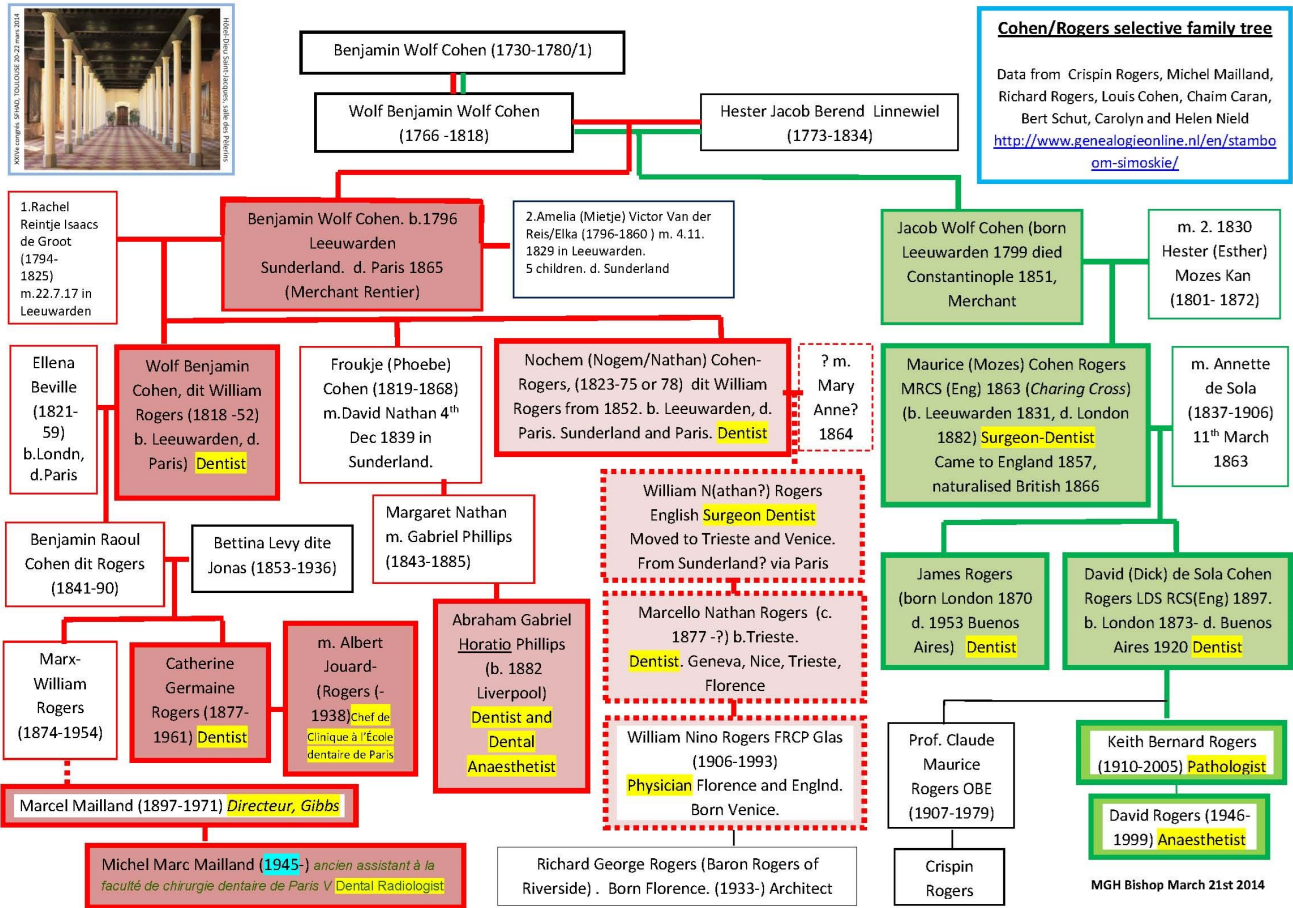


Fig. 1a. Cohen-Rogers Family tree

Rogers who trained in Geneva, and whose thesis was published in Trieste. Marcello's son William Nino Rogers was a physician. William Nino returned to England (they had all kept their British citizenship), and the famous architect Richard Rogers (Lord Rogers) is his son. As yet there is no confirmation of any connection with William Rogers I, or Nochem Cohen-Rogers (William Rogers II), though the circumstantial evidence for a connection is strong. All these dentists were known as English dentists (or in the case of William Rogers I 'Dentists from London'). The Italian branch kept British Citizenship - however, no record of Nochem Cohen-Rogers being naturalised British or French has yet been found, and he may have remained a Dutch citizen.

### Maurice Cohen-Rogers, MRCS LSA LDSO (1831-1882)

Like his cousins William and Nathan, Maurice was born in Leeuwarden. Family legend relates that he received his training in dentistry in Paris with a certain « Roget » from whom he took his surname, and this could have been either of his older cousins. Crispin Rogers (Maurice's great grandson) has seen evidence that Maurice continued to develop his dental skills in the service of the British in India. On his return to London, and bearing testimonials from a senior army officer, he enrolled as a medical student at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School. With substantial Royal patronage, and supported by the University of London, this was an elite institution that had opened in 1834, earlier graduates being David Livingstone (student 1838-1840) and Th. Huxley (1st MB 1845). Having « walked the wards » he was admitted MRCS in 1863.

In 1864, the first year in which his name appears in the London and Provincial Medical Directory, there is no mention of dentistry, but the following year the entry changes both to advertise his speciality as a



Fig. 1b. Ellena Beville. Courtesy Michel Mailland

surgeon-dentist, and to record that he was the author of *A Sketch of the Progress and Appliances of Dental Surgery*. He published less than his cousin, only two works are known, this one, and *The teeth bequeathed by nature and restored with art*. He also filed, in 1866, a patent specification for « Fitting Artificial Teeth ». Then in 1866, at the age of 34, as a



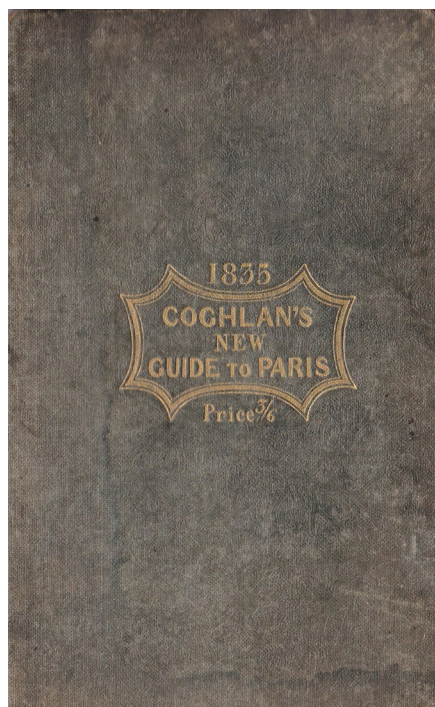
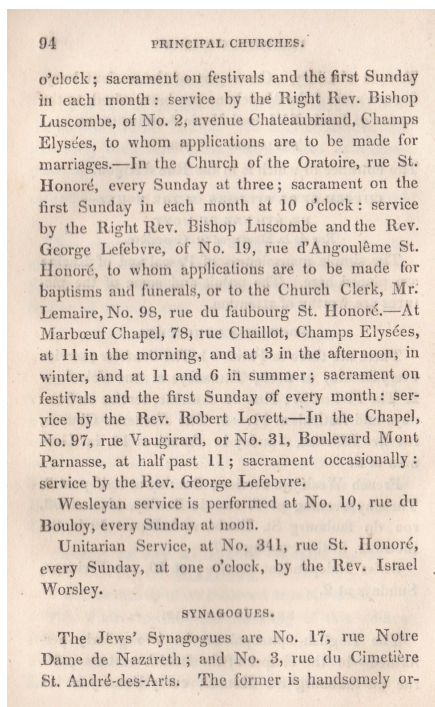
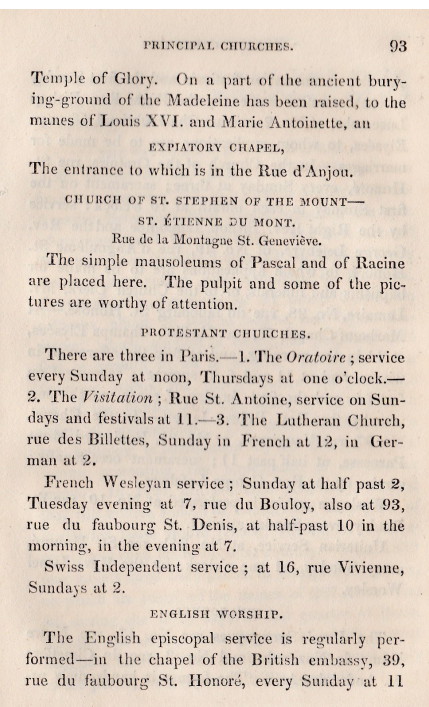


Fig. 2. Coghlan's New Guide to Paris, 1835. Bishop Luscombe at the Embassy



surgeon and dentist, he was naturalised British, having been resident in England for nine years. His licentiate in dental surgery of 1871 was awarded by the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario, Canada, which had been founded three years earlier, in 1868. Their Register states that this was on the basis of having been in practice for the previous five years. He was in London in 1872, and it remains to be seen whether he had been in Canada, or intended to go there. In 1877 he qualified as a licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries, and in 1879 was entered in the first English Dentists Register on the grounds of his having been in practice before the Dentists Act of the previous year. His intellectual capacity clearly matched his clinical skills.

It would seem that Maurice neither needed, nor perhaps wished, to follow anything but the most orthodox and respectable of careers in England. Circumstances were, of course, very different from those experienced by his older cousins in Paris. In 1849 Dr Skiers, to whom William Rogers dedicated his *Encyclopedie* of 1845, and who had left Paris for London, said to his friends; « Separated suddenly by the unfortunate revolution of Paris" [1848] our resolutions were « In the hope of meeting again in quiet in our peaceful Old England ».

John's-Wood and Portland-Town Provident Dispensary reflect both his professional status and a willingness to undertake pro bono work. These were charitable institutions in which patients recommended by sponsors would be treated free of charge. When he died, aged only 50, in 1882, he left £11, 50s 9s 10d (very approximately 750,000 Euros).

Maurice's practices at 18 New Burlington Street and 30 New Cavendish Street were in the heart of fashionable London, and this is particularly true of the final practice which from 1877 was at 23 Wimpole Street. In 1967 the British Dental Association Headquarters moved opposite. The family account is that, if not a patient, Charles Dickens was an acquaintance.

### James Rogers (1871-1953)

Both of Maurice Cohen Rogers' sons became dentists. James trained first at London University and then at North Western University, Chicago. Whilst in America he married Janet Blu-

mental (?-1935). He emigrated to Argentina as one of the earliest English dentists, first in 1891 in Bahia Blanca (to the South-West of Buenos Aires) and then Pergamino (somewhat closer to Buenos Aires to the West) before settling in Buenos Aires itself in partnership with a Dr Mathiason. His reputation was such that amongst his patients were two Argentine Presidents, and the famous Sarah Bernhardt, who visited in 1892 and 1905. Continuing the family tradition of public service, he was chief dentist at the British Hospital, and then consulting dental surgeon. His obituary noted that he was sociable, with friends « outstanding in different spheres» and that his success had come through talent, able technique, hard work, and tenacity, leaving him during the eighteen years of his retirement in a position to entertain in his town house and his « quinta » at the Tigre. Perhaps the most telling remark is that he « despite over sixty years of residence [...] always remained staunchly and characteristically British. » It would seem clear also that following the early death of his brother, he continued to support the widow and family.

### David (Dick) de Sola Rogers, LDS RCS Eng. (1873-1920)

David, always known as Dick, was born in London at 30 New Cavendish Street and in the Census of 1891 he is listed as a Dentist's Apprentice, living in Maida Vale, at 93 Maryland's Rd with his widowed mother, sister Rica and a domestic servant whilst studying. He qualified LDS RCS Eng. in June 1897, going to Argentina to join his brother in 1906 after the death of Mathiason. He was also determinedly British, and his insistence on his children (one of whom was Claude Rogers, the artist and co-founder of the Euston Road School) being English was to have a considerable impact on the lives of the family. His wife Ada (Rubenstein) came to England each time a baby was due, and one of these confinements having coincided with the outbreak of war in 1914, the family was separated for the duration. He was operated on in London for cancer in 1920, but died shortly after returning to Argentina. « He was one of the finest fellows ever born [...], very fond of his work in which he was first class ».



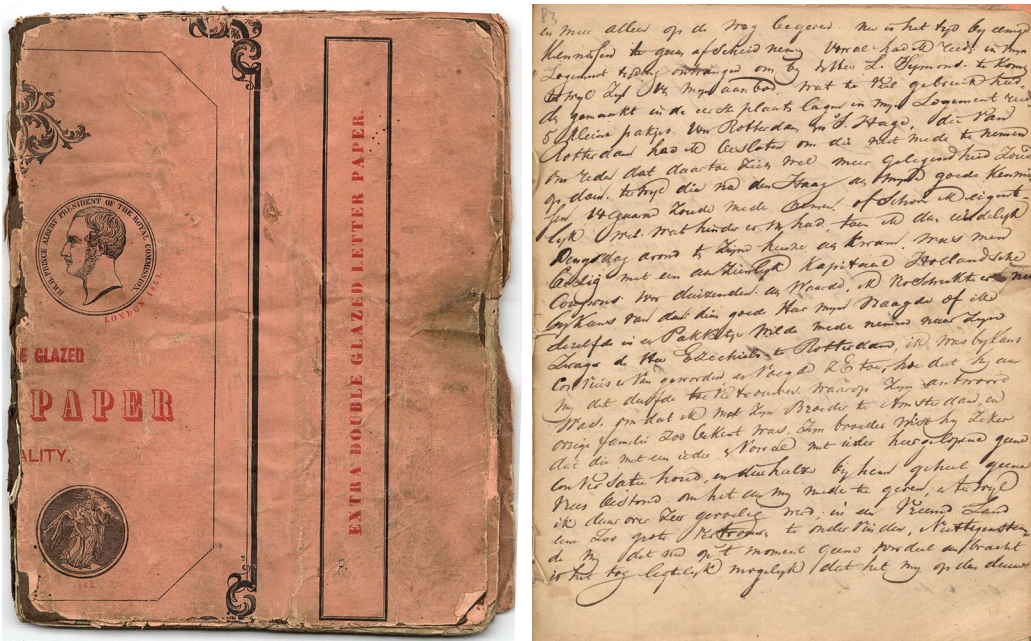


Fig 3. Van der Reis Diary – RHC Groninger Archieven, Historische verzameling (Tg. 755) inv. nr. 374). Front cover and p. 83

### Keith Rogers and David Rogers

Dick's younger son Keith (1910-2005) continued the medical tradition of the family. He went with a scholarship to St Mary's Hospital Medical School in London and qualified in 1935. As a research assistant he worked with Sir Almoth Wright and Sir Alexander Fleming on sulphonamides and penicillin. A founding fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists, he specialised as a consultant microbiologist based at Birmingham Children's Hospital. His reason for not becoming a Professor was that this would interfere with his all-important clinical service to his patients. Shortly after the war, Keith went to Italy in the Royal Army Medical Corps and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He was blessed with six children and 13 great grandchildren. His son David (1946-1999) specialised as an anaesthetist.

### More about Benjamin Cohen

Dr. Bert Schut of Groningen has established that Benjamin - father of William, Nathan, and Phoebe - moved permanently to England in 1834-5. He may have made earlier visits according to William, who was astonished at seeing sympathetic magic applied to toothache at Newgate in 1825 when he was 7 years old. We know that Benjamin and his second wife Amelia were in London at 17 Nottingham Place in Stepney in 1838 for the birth of their twins Esther and Caroline (-1875), and Wolf/William Rogers gives Stepney as his London residence at his marriage to Ellena in 1839. The census of 1841 has Amelia and five girls with a servant in Sunderland, while Benjamin was in London. Then at the 1851 census, Benjamin was again in London without his family, but this time he was with his brother-in-law Samuel Van der Reis (1800-1888) - who has left an invaluable diary record of his visit to England. Samuel was the brother of Benjamin Cohen's second wife Meitje (Amelia) and therefore step-uncle of William Rogers, Phoebe, and Nogem Cohen Rogers. The *Journal* (Fig. 2) has been put on line (2014) by Dr Bert Schut of Groningen. The *Journal*, which also covers the time when Maurice's father moved to Istanbul, provides valuable information about the family, as well as being a most interesting record of the times. In Sunderland Samuel had been very impressed both by the personality and dental busi-

ness of Nathan. In London they did business and visited the site of the Great Exhibition (they left just before it opened, but would have seen the Crystal Palace under construction). While in London Benjamin recruited an assistant for Nathan - not knowing that the early death of William the next year would turn all such plans upside-down, and that Nathan would move to Paris. William Rogers had his own financial interests in England, and he left « Goods chattels or Credits » to the value of £3,000 in London (approx. £200,000 today). His executors were the mayor of the Second District, the chief Rabbi of Paris, and Alphonse Chaumont.

### Some Marriages

In Michel Mailland's previous report there was some doubt about where the marriage of William Rogers took place. This can now be resolved, as the entry from the Register of the British Embassy in Paris has been identified and shows that the marriage was solemnised by Bishop Luscombe at the Embassy on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1839, the year of William's move from London to Paris. The bride's mother Charlotte Beville (née Lestly) gave permission, as Ellena (1821- 1859) was still a minor, being aged only 18, and the other witness at the marriage was a James Russell - there is no mention of her father being present, though he was still living. Ellena's father William Thomas Beville (1784-1844) was a London doctor and surgeon, and his rank in society was that of Gentleman. Her mother was born in Calcutta, but was not baptised until the age of 5 when in London. She and Thomas were married by Archbishop's Licence in 1820. Their London addresses were in good locations far removed from Stepney in the East End. Cadogan Place, Sloane Street, Chelsea in 1826, Guilford Place at the time of the baptism of Ellena, at St James Church Clerkenwell, on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1821, and St Marylebone when her younger sister was baptised in 1824.

### Bishop Luscombe

William Rogers and Ellena Beville were married by Bishop Luscombe, Matthew Henry Thornhill Luscombe (1775-1846), who had been appointed by the Prime Minister George Canning as Chaplain to the Paris Embassy (Fig. 2) in 1824 follow-

ing the death of the Rev Mr Foster (whose widow Dr Skiers treated). He had been Consecrated Bishop in 1825 in the Scottish Episcopal Church, which was allied to the Church of England. Like her mother, Ellena was baptised as a Christian and the marriage service was a Christian one. The marriage of William's young cousin Maurice took place at Bevis Marks Synagogue in London - Sephardic, and the oldest in England. The bride was Annette de Sola (1837-1906), the daughter of David de Aaron de Sola (1796-1860) a famous theologian and the Chazan at the Synagogue. Their elder son James's marriage to Janet Blumenthal in the United States has already been mentioned, and their younger son Dick married Rebecca Ida Rubenstein at the London Synagogue in Lauderdale Road in 1906.

## Le docteur Skiers and R.W. Neech.

Readers of Michel Mailland's account of William Rogers I will have seen mention of an R W Neech in the context of a court case brought by Nogem/Nathan Cohen-Rogers (William Rogers II) in 1863. Neech was a previous employee of the Rogers practice, and had continued to practise independently on the second floor of the same building, 270 rue Saint-Honoré (previously the home of Olympe de Gouges who perished in the Terror). The account of the case is particularly interesting in that it makes clear that after the death of William Rogers I (Wolf Benjamin Cohen) the name William Rogers had become a valuable franchise, 'un nom commercial'. In 1853 Galignani's *New Paris Guide* continued to list 'Mr. Rogers, Surgeon-Dentist of London' at 270 Rue Saint-Honoré, with a two-page advertisement for the services and accessories offered. The franchise was recognised by the Tribunal, and Neech was ordered to remove references to Williams [sic] Rogers from his 'tableau', where he was described as "M. R. W. Neech, english dentist, ex-premier opérateur de la maison Williams [sic] Rogers" and also from any advertising material. RW Neech was probably Robert William Neech (1838-1913). He married Margaret Jeanne Eager (1830-?) and their daughter Mary Margaret (1855-1895) married William Henry Lawrence (1843-c.1922) who also practised as an English surgeon-dentist in Paris and Colombes, Seine-et-Oise (now Bois-Colombes, Hauts-de-Seine). Their children stayed in France, and Jean-Jaques Lawrence, a great great grandson of Robert William died in 1944 fighting the Germans in Villar-d'Arène, Hautes-Alpes. Van der Reis does not name the young man who was recruited as an assistant to Nathan in 1851, but it is certainly possible that this was Robert Neech, who would have been 13 or 14 years old at the time. Neech is an East Anglian name. M. Mailland also mentions Dr Skiers, to whom William dedicated his *Encyclopedie*. 'Le Docteur Skiers' was probably Edmund Skiers (1794 (Baptised 1796) -1860), born in Jamaica, and the acknowledged natural son of the rich planter Henry Shirley of Hyde Hall (1745-1812), and of a freed slave, Sarah Skiers, a mulatto. His grandfather, another Henry, was a partner in the Compagnie Anglaise in the Savoy region and later the British envoy to Turin. His grandmother, Maria De Vliger (orig. Dutch) was 'of Chambeéy France' (Haute-Savoie) and this, together with his father's time in France - Henry was probably also born in Savoy where his brother (Edmund's uncle) Bernard was born in 1747, provide an explanation for Edmund being bilingual. "I was the first Englishman she had spoken to professionally, my speaking perfectly [sic] French"

## Conclusion

The next step in this enquiry is uncertain, and there is still much to find out about the family. Not least there is a possible connection to the Drielsma/Jones family of dentists, comprising some 28 dentists in England. The constructive

influence on the dental profession in France and England of the « outsider » is also worth considering when looking at the remarkable achievements of the Cohen-Rogers.

## Acknowledgements

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